

THE TULANE HULLABALOO
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NSA Affiliation

National student organizations in the United States have long played a rather uncertain role in American life. They do not have the real importance in national political affairs exercised by their counterparts in some other nations. Their ambitions and pretensions have tended to outstrip their potential for effective power, and their statements on national and international issues have been received with vast disdain by both students and the rest of the nation. But all this does not mean that national student organizations have no viable role to play, nor that there are not valid reasons for the Associated Student Body, acting through the Student Senate, to join one.

Of the variety of such organizations which Tulane might consider joining, it seems to us that the credentials of the National Student Association are the most impressive. The largest and best-known of the national student groups, NSA has recovered creditably from the revelation last February that it had been receiving covert financing from the Central Intelligence Agency for over a decade. This unfortunate connection seems to have been completely severed, and many of NSA's current leaders are among those who opposed the idea of CIA aid when they learned of it. In fact, although NSA has suffered one or two notable losses since disclosure of its CIA ties, it has picked up many more schools and now has some 320 member student bodies.

Many of these gains, perhaps ironically, have been among Southern schools which, like Tulane, had left or refused to join NSA earlier because of its liberal stands on civil rights and other political and social issues. Apparently these schools decided that any group backed by the CIA couldn't be all bad. For those with any doubts, the NSA is still a predominantly liberal group: it supports civil rights (and even "black power" to an extent), opposes the Vietnam war, and the like. But NSA is by no means as radical as groups like the National Students for a Democratic Society. Its political stands are reasoned and responsible, and are in any case not binding on member student bodies in any way. But, more important, the NSA focus seems to shifted inward since the CIA affair. Its major concern now is affairs of the campus: the role of students in university government, the existence of a free and uncensored student press, legal rights of students-- what may be summed up, in a handy if sometimes unenlightening phrase, as "student power."

It is clearly this campus orientation of NSA which has led Student Senate President Hank Harnage to recommend that Tulane reaffiliate with the organization which it left two years ago. Withdrawal then was accomplished by a typically silly student referendum, which was under-publicized, under-voted and under-rational. NSA opponents let loose a volley of absurd charges about NSA's being a vaguely Communist organization, and no one on the other side seemed to care enough to refute them. So a handful of students voted Tulane out of NSA. The effect on the campus has not been catastrophic, to be sure, but we have a feeling that any connection which helps bring Tulane into the proverbial "mainstream" of American student life is a beneficial and healthy thing for both our students and the whole University.

Taken all in all, we would urge the Student Senate to vote Tuesday in favor of Harnage's recommendation. At a time when both the Senate and its leaders are trying to make student government a more meaningful and effective instrument, we believe that this action would be a significant step in that direction.

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